Evasion of sales tax on HSD

95. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the CBI has recently unearthed a scandal involving nearly rupees 100 crores sales tax evasion on High Speed Diesel in some States, as reported in the Hindustan Times, dated 16th June, 2000;

(b) if so, whether there is a nexus between official of oil companies and the persons to whom HSD quota is released;

(c) if so, the details of the *modus operandi* of such scandal; and

(d) the action Government propose to take against the officials of the oil companies and to check such scandals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (d) Some customers who were obtaining petroleum products on concessional sales tax basis are alleged to have been diverting these products for the purposes other than the intended use thereby evading sales tax. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case in the matter on 23rd May, 2000 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Growing oil pool deficit

96. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's oil pool deficit is growing at the rate of Rs. 500 crore per month and it is likely to hit Rs. 7,600 crore by the end of July this year;

(b) whether if it is a fact that the light of present international prices of crude oil which may be at $25 per barrel or so, India's oil import bill is likely to be in the region of Rs. 57,000 crore; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to reduce the oil import bill as well as not to increase further price of petroleum products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) The cumulative outstanding claims of oil companies from the oil pool account stood at about Rs. 6,000 crores as on 31.3.2000 (provisional).